



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE**  
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**KEVIN T. CASEY**  
Deputy Secretary  
Office of Developmental Programs

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Dear Colleague:

As you are aware, the Office of Developmental Programs has chosen Ascend to administer the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS©) as the statewide needs assessment for all participants of the Person Family Directed Supports (PFD/S) and Consolidated Waivers. The SIS© is a reliable and valid needs assessment developed by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and can be used for people age 16 - 72.

For the past several months ODP has been sharing information with various stakeholders about the implementation of the SIS©. We have conducted a number of statewide trainings for Supports Coordinators (SC) through our SC Leadership trainings and for Administrative Entities through our Academy sessions. We have also posted online a series of informational videos regarding the SIS©. Work by the Partnership continues on the development and delivery of training specific to and for self-advocates, individuals and families.

To help prepare individuals and families for the implementation of the SIS© assessment we have developed and enclosed a fact sheet. Supports Coordinators should review this information and share with individuals and families prior to the scheduling of the SIS© assessment. Ascend will begin conducting voluntary practice assessments in late January and formal assessments will begin in early February 2008.

Several opportunities are scheduled in the near future to learn more about the SIS©. Beginning in late January, early February we have scheduled a number of SC Leadership Forums. The next online video series will be an introduction to Ascend, and a representative from Ascend will be providing a short presentation at the next PAC meeting scheduled for January 18, 2008.

As we move forward with the implementation process, please help us to distribute this to all persons served through your agency.

Sincerely,



Kevin T. Casey

Enclosure

c: Mr. Chambers  
PAC

**Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare**  
**Office of Developmental Programs**  
**Supports Intensity Scale®**  
**Fact Sheet**

**Why Am I Receiving this Fact Sheet?**

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) assured the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) that a statewide, standardized assessment would be adopted to consistently assess the need of Waiver participants. The SIS® is the primary needs assessment for everyone enrolled in the Person/Family Directed Support (P/FDS) or Consolidated Waiver. Over the next few years, all people enrolled in either Waiver will receive an assessment. If you are not receiving Waiver Funded Services, this does not apply.

Completion of a SIS® is a requirement for participation in the Person/Family Directed Support (P/FDS) or Consolidated Waiver. If a person is currently enrolled in a Waiver, he/she must receive a SIS® assessment over the next few years. If a person is newly enrolled in a Waiver, he/she will receive a SIS® assessment prior to the receipt of Waiver eligible services.

**What is the SIS®?**

The Supports Intensity Scale (SIS®) is a reliable and valid needs assessment developed by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD). The SIS® is used to evaluate the support needs of people aged sixteen to seventy-two with intellectual disabilities (mental retardation). The SIS® focuses on the level of support needed by a person instead of deficits in skills.

The person him/herself and people who know the person best provide the information for the assessment during a structured interview. Topics included in the SIS® that are covered during the interview include home living, community living, lifelong learning, employment, health and safety, social activities, protection and advocacy, and exceptional medical and behavioral support needs.

**How will the SIS® be Used?**

The SIS® is utilized by the Individual Support Plan (ISP) team in the development of the ISP. The SIS® is not the sole basis for determining what services and supports a person receives; the assessment provides information on support needs, but does not provide information about how or where those needs will be addressed (e.g. natural supports, paid supports, community supports, etc.). Planning for how to address needs continues to be the role of the ISP team.

**How Often is the SIS<sup>©</sup> Completed?**

The SIS<sup>©</sup> is current for up to three years. At the end of the three year period, a reassessment will be conducted. For example, an initial assessment conducted in October 2007 would be reviewed for currency and accuracy in October 2008 and October 2009. The next full assessment for this person would occur in October 2010. If at any time between 2007 and 2010, this person experiences a significant life change that has a lasting impact on his or her support needs, a new assessment would be conducted.

The SIS<sup>©</sup> is reviewed at least annually by the ISP team to determine if the assessment results accurately reflect the needs of the person. Any time a person experiences a significant life change that has a lasting impact on his/her needs; the SIS<sup>©</sup> must be reviewed and evaluated by the ISP team for currency and accuracy. If, at any time, it is determined that the SIS<sup>©</sup> no longer accurately captures the support needs of the person, a new assessment will be completed.

**Who Completes the SIS<sup>©</sup>?**

ODP has selected Ascend Management Innovations LLC, doing business as “Ascend”, to administer the SIS<sup>©</sup> for Waiver participants in the state of PA. In order to ensure that the assessments are conducted in a manner that is independent and conflict-free, a vendor hired by ODP will conduct all SIS<sup>©</sup> assessments.

Ascend works with people, families, supports coordinators, providers, and all other people participating in the assessment interview to schedule the meeting. The meeting is scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for the person and family.

All interviewers (people who conduct the assessments) are trained by ODP and certified by AAIDD. The ODP training covers topics including the PA Mental Retardation service system, Everyday Lives, the P/FDS and Consolidated Waivers, the ISP, and the process and procedure for conducting interviews.

**Where is More Information Available?**

Additional information about SIS<sup>©</sup> is available through your Supports Coordinator and County MR program. You can also call the Office of Developmental Program’s Customer Service Line at 1-888-565-9435 or access AAIDD’s SIS<sup>©</sup> website ([www.siswebsite.org](http://www.siswebsite.org)). Information regarding ODP’s use of the SIS<sup>©</sup> can be found at the Office of Developmental Programs consulting website, [www.odpconsulting.net](http://www.odpconsulting.net). For information regarding Ascend, please view [www.ascendami.com](http://www.ascendami.com).